

A CONVERSATION WITH THE PRESIDENT - GERALD R. FORD (4-21-1975)

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From April 21st, 1975 CBS NEWS Walter Cronkite, Bob Schieffer and Eric Sevareid interview President Gerald R. Ford at the White House.

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this is a cbs news special from the white house in washington d.c a conversation with president gerald r ford president ford will be interviewed in the blue room one of the reception rooms off the grand hall restored to its 1817 style the president will be interviewed by cbs news correspondents walter cronkite eric severide and bob schieffer here is walter cronkite good evening mr president good evening walter thank you for this opportunity to talk with you this evening here from the blue room of the white house i'm looking forward to it mr president just this moment as we came on the air i was advised over this little machine here that the associated press and the united press international are reporting from honolulu that a large number of battle-equipped marines 800 or so have left hawaii by air uncharted aircraft can you tell us what their destination is and what's up well that's part of a movement to strengthen or to bring up to strength the marine detachment in the in that area of the pacific it's not an unusual uh military movement on the other hand we felt under the circumstances that it was wise to bring the marine group in that area of the

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the marine group in that area of the world the south pacific up to strength can you tell us where they're going sir well they're going i don't think i should be any more definitive than that they're not going directly to saigon no they are not now that president chu has resigned which was the big news this morning of course are we involved in or are we acting as intermediary in any negotiations for a peaceful settlement out there we're exploring with a number of governments negotiating opportunities but in this very rapid change with president thu stepping down there really hasn't been an opportunity for us to make contact with a new government and the net result is we're planning to explore with them and with other governments in that area or connected with that area so that we don't miss any opportunity to try and get a fire mr president what what is your own estimate of the situation now do you think that the hanoi people want to negotiate the turnover the of the city a peaceful turnover or just drive ahead eric i i wish i knew i don't think anybody can be absolutely certain except the north vietnamese themselves you get the impression that in the last few days they were anxious to move in very quickly for a quick takeover on the other hand uh within the last 12 24 hours there seems to be a slowdown it's not certain from what we see just what their tactic will be we naturally hope that there is a period when the fighting will cease or the military activity will become less

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military activity will become less intense so that uh negotiations might be undertaken or even a ceasefire achieved but it's it's so fluid right now i don't think anybody can be certain what they the north vietnamese are going they're not are they communicating with this with our government through third parties or otherwise well we have communications with other governments i can't tell you whether the north vietnamese are communicating with them or not i don't know president two when he stepped down said that one of the reasons was american pressure what was our role in his resignation our government made no direct request

that president thu stepped down there was no pressure by me or anyone in washington in that regard there may have been some on the scene in saigon who may have talked to president thu but there was no pressure from here to force president thu to step down and he made i'm sure the final decision uh all on his own but surely our representatives there would not speak without your authority on this matter well it's a question of how you phrase it we never asked anybody to ask him to step down there were discussions as to whether or not he should or shouldn't but there was no direct request from me for him to relinquish his role as the head of state after all he was an elected president he was the head of that government properly chosen and so his decision as far as we know was made totally on his own mr president on the uh the evacuation you've expressed hope that something could be arranged so tens of

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something could be arranged so tens of thousands of loyal south vietnamese could be brought out of the country do you think it's possible to to have something like that if the north vietnamese oppose it or the viet cong are not willing to go along with it and are are any kind of negotiations underway now to try to set up some sort of an arrangement like that i would agree with you that if the north vietnamese make a military effort it would be virtually impossible to do so unless we moved in substantial u.s military personnel to protect the evacuation on the other hand if the south vietnamese should make it difficult in their disappointment that our support hadn't been as much as they thought it should be their involvement would make it virtually impossible again without a sizable u.s military commitment that's one reason why we want to cease fire that's why we want the military operation stop so that we can certainly get all the americans out without any trouble and hopefully those south vietnamese that we feel a special obligation to but at the moment it does not appear that that is possible we intend to keep working on it because we feel it's the humane and the proper thing to do but what if it's not possible then what do you do do you ask the congress to let you send those troops in there american troops to protect withdrawal you send them in without congressional approval or what do you do next as you know i have asked the congress to clarify my authority as president to send american troops in to bring about the evacuation of friendly south vietnamese or south vietnamese that we have an obligation to or at least i think we do there's no problem in sending u.s

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there's no problem in sending u.s military personnel into south vietnam to evacuate americans that is permitted under the war powers act providing we give adequate pre-notification to the congress that's what we did in the case of phnom penh in our personnel lair but if we are going to have a sizeable evacuation of south vietnamese i would think the congress ought to clarify the law and give me specific authority whether they will or not i can't tell you at this point if you do send them in and congress gives you the authority they'll have to have our air power it will have to be a sizable commitment they'll they'll almost have to have just an open-ended uh authority and there won't be an in order to protect themselves and that's what you're asking for isn't it unless the north vietnamese and the south vietnamese have a ceasefire and then the evacuation of those south vietnamese could be done very easily now if there is a military conflict still going on and or if either one side or the other shows displeasure about this and if we decided to do it there are a number of ifs in that yes there would have to be some fairly sizable u.s on a short term very precise military involvement not on a broad scale of course mr president when did you last talk to president chu i have not personally talked to president two since i became president i've had a number of exchanges of correspondence with him but the last time i talked to him was when he was in the united states

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he was in the united states and i was minority leader and that was roughly two years ago as i recollect gracious we have this hotline with our potential great power adversary the soviet union and yet with an ally who is in dire straits at this moment there's no communication between the presidents it seems strange well there is very good communication between myself our secretary of state and our ambassador there so there's no lack of communication in in and through proper channels i don't think it's essential in this situation

that there be a direct communication between myself and former president too might help to solve some of the misunderstandings if you had talked directly to him i don't think so we have had uh communications back and forth both by message as well as by correspondence i think we understood one another i think some of his comments were more directed at our government as a whole and directed at me personally mr president well one of his comments was that the united states had led the south vietnamese people to their death do you have any specific reply to that one well there were some public and corresponding private commitments made in 1972-1973 where i think that the president of south vietnam could have come to the conclusion as he did that the united states government would do two things one replace military hardware on a one for one basis keep his military strength sufficiently high so that he can meet any of the challenges of the north and in addition there was a

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of the north and in addition there was a commitment that we as a nation would try to enforce the agreements that were signed in paris in january 1973. now unfortunately the congress in august of 1973 removed the latter took away from the president the power to move in a military way to enforce the agreements that were signed in paris so we were left then only with the other commitment and unfortunately the replacement of military hardware was not lived up to and i therefore can understand president hughes uh disappointment and in the rather traumatic exper times that he went through in the last week i can understand his observations well what are the what is the relative weight that you assigned to first this question of how much aid we sander didn't send and his use of it especially in this pullback where does the great where is the greater mistake because historically this is terribly important well it's my judgment and history will be probably more precise but it's my judgment at the moment that the failure of the congress to appropriate the military aid requested the previous administration asked for a billion 400 million dollars for this fiscal year congress authorized a billion dollars congress appropriated 700 million dollars and the failure to make the commitment for this fiscal year of something close to what

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of something close to what was asked for certainly raised doubts in the mind of president thu and his military that we would be supplying sufficient military hardware for them to adequately defend their various positions in south vietnam now the lack of support certainly wasn't had an impact on the decision that president thu made to withdraw precipitously i don't think he would have withdrawn if the support had been there it wasn't there so he decided to withdraw unfortunately the withdrawal was hastily done inadequately prepared and consequently was a chaotic withdrawal of the forces from military region one two and three now how you place the blame what percentage is uh our failure to supply the arms what percentage related to a hastily and inadequately prepared withdrawal the experts after they study the records probably can give you a better assessment but the initial kickoff came for the withdrawal from the failure of our government to adequately support the military request for help mr president what i don't understand is if they're saying we we've got to leave because the united states is not going to give us some more equipment why did they leave all the equipment up there that they had why did they abandon so much of that equipment as i was saying the withdrawal was very poorly planned and hastily determined i'm not an army man i was in the navy but i've talked to a good many army and marine corps experts and they tell me that a withdrawal a military withdrawal is the most difficult maneuver to execute

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difficult maneuver to execute and this decision by president thu was hastily done without adequate preparation and it in a effect became a rout and when you're in a panicky state of mind inevitably you're going to leave a lot of military hardware it's tragic there's no excuse for that kind of a military operation but even though that happened if they had been given the military aid that general wyan recommended during the last month i'm convinced that with that additional military hardware on time there could have been a stabilization of the situation which in my judgment would have led more quickly to a ceasefire mr president

you you have said that you were not advised of this withdrawal of president are you certain however that none of the american military or diplomatic advisers out in saigon did not agree with him that a limited withdrawal might be effective in bringing pressure on congress to vote these funds and and that therefore there was an american participation in that decision as far as i know uh walter there was no pre-notification to any certainly high-ranking u.s military or civilian official of the withdrawal decision mr president this um i'm sorry tonight this whole affair is going to be argued over and there'll be vast books on it for years and years and years now wouldn't it be wisest to publish the correspondence between former president nixon and president chu which is disputed now the 73 correspondent after the paris accords well the first place i have personally read the correspondence the

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read the correspondence the first the personal correspondence between the president nixon and president who corresponds with the public record i have personally verified that i don't think in this atmosphere it would be wise to establish the precedent of publishing the personal correspondence between heads of state maybe historically after a period of time it might be possible in this instance but if we establish a precedent for the publication of correspondence between heads of state i don't think that that correspondence or that kind of correspondence will be effective because heads of state i have learned firsthand have to be very frank in their exchanges with one another and to establish a precedent that such correspondence would be public i think will downgrade what heads of state try to do in order to solve problems there's no way to keep president two from publishing it no if uh but things like this have been judiciously leaked often enough when it served the purposes of a president or secretary of state you have no such plans for that no i have no such plans i think and to be very frank about it it seems to me that the american people today are yearning for a new start as i said in my state of the world address to the congress let's start afresh now unless i'm pressed i don't say the congress did this or did that i have to be frank if i'm asked the categorical question i think we ought to turn back the past and take a long look at how we can solve these problems

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these problems affirmatively in the future vietnam has been a trauma for this country for 15 years or more a lot of blame can be shared by a good many people democrats as well as republicans congress as well as presidents we've got some big jobs to do in other parts of the world we have treaty commitments to keep we have relations with adversaries or potential adversaries that we should be concerned about and it's my judgment under these circumstances we should look ahead and not concentrate on the problems of the past where a good bit of blame can be shared by many mr president uh vice president rockefeller suggested that he thinks this will be an issue in the 1976 campaign will you make it an issue in 76 or will you try to keep it out of the campaign i will not make it a campaign issue in 1976 well will will mr rockefeller i didn't quite understand what he was driving at in that recent interview when he said you know if two or three thousand americans die in this evacuation that raises some issues well of course the record whatever a man in public office says can be in and of itself a campaign issue but i can speak only for myself that i do not intend to go out and point the finger or make a speech concerning those who have differed with me who i might privately think contributed to the problem by 1976 i would hope we could look forward with some progress in the field of foreign policy i think we've got some potential successes that will be very much possible as we look ahead

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very much possible as we look ahead so rather than to replay the past with all the division and divisive feelings between good people in this country i just hope we can admit we made some mistakes not try to assess the blame but decide how we can solve the problems that are on our doorstep and we have a few but they're solvable if we stick together if we have a high degree of american unity there's not as much trouble leaving the vietnam issue as the nation has had and leaving vietnam here tonight but i'd like to ask just one more have you talked to former president nixon about any aspect of this vietnam thing in the last few weeks after my state of the world speech april 10th he called me congratulated me on it we discussed what i had

said and it was a rather short but a very friendly chat on the telephone many talk about secret agreements as i recall a conversation he reiterated what i have said that the public record corresponds with the private uh private uh correspondence in reference to the uh commitments moral or legal or otherwise speaking of your state of the world address there was speculation around just before that address that you were going to use it to put your own stamp on foreign policy i think the phrase was to get out from under the shadow of secretary henry kissinger do you feel you did that with that speech or was that ever your intention it wasn't done to show any uh particular purpose other than the problems we had vietnam of course was number one on the agenda we did want to indicate that and i must say we it means the administration that we were strengthening nato we had

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that we were strengthening nato we had to solve the problem of the dispute between greece and turkey over cyprus it was sort of a world look and i don't think it was necessary for me to put my own imprint i think it's more important to deal with reality rather than to try and go off on my own the problems have to be solved and i don't care who has the label for mr president uh we all get the impression and have ever since you've been in office that you get your foreign policy advice exclusively from henry kissinger if that isn't so who else do you listen to that's a good question and i would like to answer it quite frankly the national security council meets on the major decisions that i have to make salt mbfr etc i get the recommendations from the national security council that includes secretary kissinger secretary schlesinger the head of the cia the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff the major decisions come to me in option papers from the national security council now i meet daily with secretary kissinger for about an hour because i think it's important for me to be brought up day by day on what the circumstances are in the various areas where we have potential decision making on the agenda but the the actual information that is involved in a major decisions comes through the national security council if suppose there is a position paper or

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if suppose there is a position paper or a policy recommendation from somebody in the national security council to which the secretary is opposed could it get to you could it get passed into you surely no question about that as a matter of fact in our discussions in the national security council uh particularly when we were preparing for uh assault ii negotiations there were some options proposed by one individual or others there wasn't unimate unanimity at the outset but by having as i recall three or four nsc meetings we resolved those differences and at the outset there were differences but when we got through there was unanimity and what we decided one more short question on this uh it was the uh complaint of many people who worked with president johnson on the vietnam war that he never had time to read any of the books about indochina the french experience the vietnam movement and so on have you ever had time to read the books about that i over the years have read four to five books but i have had the experience of sitting on a committee on appropriations that had involvement going back as early as 1953 with economic military aid to south vietnam and those hearings on appropriations for economic and military aid would go into the problems of south vietnam laos cambodia south vietnam in great depth so this outside reading plus the testimony plus the opportunity to visit south vietnam i think has given me a fairly good background on

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background on the history as well as the current circle do you get time to read any books now oh i read uh eric about uh uh one a month mr president i i'd plan to ask you this later but perhaps it follows eric's question sort of related to this subject and that is covering you you're a very active president you travel a lot you take part in a lot of public activities you've said that you want to take the presidency to the people but do you really have time to to give serious thought to questions when when do you reserve time to just think about things do i suppose the question is do you feel sometimes that you devote too much time to secondary things not at all i am a very well organized person when i'm in the office i have a very set routine that gives me the opportunity to read position papers recommendations outside material and if you spend as i do on the

average 14 to 15 hours a day on the job in one way or another i think i do have an opportunity to get not only the input from government people but an input from people on the outside now it is true i will travel some but i happen to think it's wholesome and healthy for a president to get out of washington to go to new hampshire to go to boston to go to new orleans to go to other places you get a little different perspective of not only the problems but the attitude of people and it is helpful to get that input from other sources john hersey that excellent new york times magazine piece yesterday said that you uh are quite impatient with palace feuds

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uh are quite impatient with palace feuds that's an understatement and yet the reports have gone around quite uh quite uh continually here in washington that there are members of your most intimate white house staff who would like to see dr kissinger go are you aware of that well if they believe it they've never said it to me i happen to think henry kissinger is an outstanding secretary of state i have thought it since i have known him and he has been in the job fortunately my personal acquaintanceship with secretary kissinger goes back 10 or 15 years so i've known him over a period of time and it's my strong feeling that he has made a tremendous contribution to world peace he has been the most effective secretary of state certainly in my period of service in the congress or in the vice presidency or the white house and i have never heard anybody on my staff ever make a recommendation to me that uh secretary kissinger should leave what about i would strongly disagree with them and let them know it quite forthrightly but what about suggestions that perhaps that someone else should be the national security adviser that he should give up one of those hats how do you feel about that if you were to draw a chart i think you might make a good argument that that job ought to be divided on the other hand sometimes in government you get unique individuals who can very successfully handle a combination of jobs like secretary kissinger is doing today as head of the national security council and secretary of state if you get that kind of a person you ought to take advantage of that

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ought to take advantage of that capability and therefore under the current circumstances i would not recommend nor would i want a division of those two responsibilities is there any talk of his resigning i have talked to secretary of state kissinger i've asked him to stay and he has committed to stay through the end of this [Music] administration january 20th 1977. mr president you said last fall changing the subject regarding the cia that you were ordering a study on how better to keep congress informed of cia activities can you tell us how that study is coming can we expect any report on that in the near future i appointed the rockefeller commission an excellent group and they are now in the process of taking testimony from people within the government and people outside of the government it's a very thorough investigation they have an outstanding staff i would expect within the next 60 to 90 days i would have from that commission its recommendations for any structural changes or any other changes that might be made but i haven't gotten that report that's the only study not a study on just congressional liaison with the cia no that to some extent is a separate issue now the congress in recent years has broadened the number of people who are filled in by the cia when i was on the committee on appropriations i don't think there were more than 10 or 12 people in the congress house and senate who were kept abreast of the budget of the cia the activities of the ci a but today i would guess but it's close

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but today i would guess but it's close to 50 to 75. now when the number of people being told [Music] reach that magnitude inevitably there can and will be leaks about some of the jobs or activities being undertaken by cia and of course the cia under those circumstances can't possibly operate effectively either covertly or overtly so i think we've got to find a better way of adequately keeping the congress informed but not enlarging the number who have to be informed mr president wouldn't the whole thing be safer and clearer and cleaner if we're simply that the law that the cia gather intelligence only and engage in no covert political operations abroad if we lived in a different world might help to make the world different well i can't imagine the united states saying we would not undertake any covert activities and knowing at the same time that

friends as well as foes are undertaking covert activity not only in the united states but elsewhere that would be like tying a president's hand behind his back in the planning and execution of foreign policy i believe that we have to have a an outstanding intelligence gathering group such as in the cia or in the other intelligence collection organizations in our government but i also think we have to have some operational activity now we cannot compete in this very real world if you're just going to tie

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real world if you're just going to tie the united states with one hand behind its back and everybody else has got two good hands to carry out their operations what people mean by covert activities i want to get clear on this does this mean does this mean the use of the dirty tricks department to support friendly governments and try to bring down unfriendly ones it covers a wide range of activities walter uh i wouldn't want to get in and try to pinpoint or define them but it covers a wide range of activities and i i just happen to believe as president but i believed it when i was in the congress that our government must carry out certain covert activities mr president what what do we get for that for these covert activities we hear about this business of destabilizing government in chile we didn't seem to help ourselves very much in that phoenix program in vietnam the secret war in laos is it that we just never hear of the successful ones that a good intelligence covert activity you don't go around talking about i will have there ever been any good ones there have been some most successful ones and i don't think it's wise for us today to talk about the good ones or even the bad ones in the past it's a very risky business but it's a very important part of our national security and i don't think we should discuss certainly i shouldn't discuss specifics i shouldn't indicate we've done this or done that but i can assure you that if we're to compete with foes on the one hand or even be equal in the execution of foreign policy with our

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the execution of foreign policy with our friends we have to have covert activities carried out but how in a democracy can they can the people have an input into what governments overseas they're going to knock off or what ones they're going to support it seems to be antithetical to the whole principle of democracy every four years walter the american people elect a president and they elect a congress every two years or most of a congress every two years the american people i think have to make a judgment that the people they elect are going to carry out of course domestic policy but equally important foreign policy and the implementation of foreign policy inevitably means that you're going to have intelligence gathering as well as operational activities by your intelligence organization can we move on to the middle east now are you reconciled to a geneva meeting now or would you still like to see some more more direct diplomacy and step by step kissinger pattern i think following the very serious disappointment of the last negotiations between israel and egypt we are committed at least in principle to going to geneva now in the meantime we are going through this process of reassessment of our whole middle eastern policy which prior to the suspension of the negotiations between egypt and israel had been a very successful one now there are really three options you could resume the suspended negotiations without making a commitment to go to

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without making a commitment to go to geneva you could go to geneva and try to get an overall settlement which is a very complicated matter many people advocated however but while you were going through this negotiation for an overall settlement as a third option you might have an interim uh negotiated settlement of between one or i mean between two of the parties such as israel and egypt now those are basically the three options we have not made any decision yet we've had our ambassadors from the middle east come back and report to me we've uh undertaken a study under the leadership of joe cisco to bring together the best thinking and all of the options we have brought in or secretary kissinger has brought in some outside experts in the middle east last week i had a meeting with a former state department official gene rostow who is an expert in this area but right at the moment we've made no firm decision as to what our next particular step will be in the middle east mr president can you foresee any possible circumstances in which you'd feel it right

to send american armed forces into the mideast on land or or in the air in other words military intervention i can't foresee any uh eric [Music] but and i i see no reason to do so so i think the answer is pretty categorically no would what about a wholly different level if there were agreement for russian and american peace patrols and that the alternative to that was

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and that the alternative to that was another mideast war would you go that far well you put it on about the the most extreme alternatives and [Music] we want peace in the middle east and i think the soviet union does too i would hope that there wouldn't be a need for either the united states or the soviet union have any having any uh peacekeeping responsibilities with their own forces in the middle east mr president is the uh there's the reassessment now going on middle east policy also include a reassessment of the u.s position toward the palestinians well if you take the path of an overall settlement going to geneva i think you have to have an analysis of what's going to happen there because the palestinians are going to demand recognition but i don't mean to infer that we've made any decision but the palestinians have to be uh have to be examined as a part of the overall middle east situation i'm not making any commitment one way or another but it has to be part of the problem that we're analyzing well let me ask you this just as a follow-up could the palestinians be included if they refuse to deal with the israelis i don't see how because the israelis in the first place don't recognize the palestinians as a proper party and the plo doesn't recognize the existence of israel so i think that's an impasse right there and it'll be one of the most difficult things that will have to be worked out if it is

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will have to be worked out if it is worked out at geneva do you have any feel for when there'd be a date for the geneva conference recon oh i've seen a lot of speculation early this summer but no set time has been determined mr president the israeli a foreign minister alone is here in washington now and the reports out of jerusalem today that he's going to suggest a summit meeting between you and president rabin do you expect to have such a meeting i wouldn't expect that i would make any commitment on that until we've had a until we're further along in our reassessment it may be desirable at some point it may be desirable to meet other parties or other heads of state in the middle east but i don't want to make any commitment tonight as to anyone or as to more than one doesn't that sort of imply that we're still being a little bit hard-nosed in our disappointment over the kissinger mission no i think it's wise for us to take a look ourselves at the new options or different options i certainly wouldn't rule out a meeting with mr rabin but i don't want to make any commitment to one until we've moved a bit further down in the process of reassessment and i reiterate that if we meet with one we certainly ought to give others an opportunity other heads of state to have the same input so there won't be any favored nation treatment of israel in the future i think we have to in this very difficult situation where the possibility of war is uh certainly a serious one if you have a war you're inevitably going to have an oil embargo i think we have to be very cautious in our process of reassessment

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in our process of reassessment mr president speaking of oil embargo and the general state of the economy which it directly affects the cities are broke the states are broke the federal government's broke in order to try to meet recessionary pressures we feed inflation to meet inflation we feed recessionary pressures is there any end to this thing what's what's down the road economically i happen to be a good bit more optimistic than the picture you paint walter but i think there are a number of facts that give me good reason to be fairly optimistic we've gone through the most precipitous inventory liquidation in the last several months in the history of record keeping in the united states and we're almost at the bottom of that and there are other factors that are appearing that are encouraging we've got some good news in the area of a lesser rate of inflation retail sales have held up pretty good new orders are doing reasonably well i'm an optimist about moving the economy forward now if we do in the latter half of this calendar year then some of the financial problems of the federal government state and local units of government will be in much better shape their revenues will increase including ours so this acute situation today that you described very dramatically i don't

think will be nearly as bad in the months ahead mr president the federal reserve board in this system of ours is virtually a fourth branch of government it's not checked or balanced by any other branch of government it can turn the money tap on or off it has the power to virtually negate any

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it has the power to virtually negate any economic recovery program that you or the congress or the two of you put forward and a lot of people think that's what has been doing would you support any of these proposals for legislation to to change the law to make them more amenable to the whole political process my judgment is that the federal reserve board needs a high degree of autonomy the minute we turn the central banking set up into a political weapon then i think our credibility for responsible monetary policy goes down the drain but it is a political weapon now but it's autonomous i can't call up arthur burns and tell him to do this or do that and the congress can't unless they change the law now on the other hand arthur burns does sit in on some of our economic policy meetings he is very helpful in his observations and i think the record will show the last two months that they the federal reserve board under his leadership have increased the supply of money very substantially yes but the quarterly average is pretty low yet well the most recent figures i think they've been published are very encouraging as to the money supply and there has been a very substantial decrease in interest rates over the last three or four months because of responsible action taken by the federal reserve board my feeling is that if we politicize the federal reserve board make it a tool of the administration or the tool of the congress we will lose a great deal of integrity

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we will lose a great deal of integrity which i think is vital in the management of our money supply but if stupidity should happen to go along with that integrity you can't do anything about it ought not to terms the members be shorter or the chairman's term be coterminous with the president's term something of that kind well something of that kind might be certainly ought to be explored but to [Music] make the chairman or the members all a part of an administration i think would lead to partisan problems that would be much much worse than any of the problems we have today if we have any and i must say in all honesty mr burns or dr burns has been very understanding and when the record of this last year is written it seems to me that there's been a close coordination between fiscal and monetary policy which will substantially contribute to the recovery we're talking about the latter part of this year mr president speaking of the presidential term i assume nothing has happened in the last few days to change your mind about running in 1976. will you enter the primaries walter i have indicated that i intend to be a candidate i have not made any categorical legal determination that i will be a candidate i did say when i was up new hampshire last friday that i expected to be up in new hampshire in march of 1976. i like the country i like the people and i might have a good reason to be up there you think that the incumbent president ought to stand in the primaries then as a general principal i like political competition and i think it's wholesome for the electorate to have candidates for whatever office

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to have candidates for whatever office stand up and defend debate uh what their views are will you debate your opposition in so many seconds i haven't made that decision because i haven't decided categorically i'm going to be a candidate but we'll take that under consideration assuming you are a candidate mr president and if mr nixon the last president offered his campaign help to you would you accept it uh i like to run on my own and uh i think when i make the decision to be a candidate i'll stand on my own record i won't solicit others to come in and help me president it seems to me you're giving us a little softer answer than i had the impression you'd been giving as i've been listening to you gave these speeches around the country recently bob you haven't heard me say categorically i was going to be a candidate and for a good reason let me tell you the reason that basically keeps me from making an all-out decision as president i inherited a number of difficult problems the economy which included inflation and unemployment the problems of vietnam the middle east i'm not blaming anybody but all of a sudden they were thrust on my shoulders i had to make

some hard decisions some unpopular ones and if i had been an active candidate in the process of making some of those decisions individuals or newspapers or others could say well he did it for political reasons i'll make those decisions uh as best i can without having the handicap of being a candidate for reelection at some point i'll make that decision but in the meantime it's better for me not to be open to the charge that i'm made making a decision for one political

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making a decision for one political reason or another but you're saying to us that you may not be a candidate i i didn't mean to leave that impression me ask you i certainly didn't mean to give you that point of view let me ask you all right let me ask you another question mr president along that line if you are a candidate are you locked in to nelson rockefeller if you're a vice president there are some people as you know very well in the right wing of your party who just can't seem to tolerate mr rockefeller would you give any thought to another running mate if indeed you are a candidate well i picked nelson rockefeller for vice president because i thought he would do a fine job he has done a fine job a person who performs well i think ought to continue on a position of responsibility and i see no reason whatsoever at this point anyhow and i can't foresee any where there should be any change if it were a matter of keeping the conservatives behind the earth ticket in 1976 she would not dump nelson rockefeller in the first place walter i think the public has a wrong perception of nelson rockefeller he is not the wild liberal that some people allege not the public it's the conservatives in your own party well i happen to think that he is a very responsible public official responsible about fiscal affairs he's responsible about strong national defense he's an excellent administrator i really think some of the charges made against him are unfair and unfounded and you open persuade the conservatives of that i think we can persuade the ones that will look at the facts i think a lot of them will because they

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i think a lot of them will because they know of his fine record do you see a rule for john connolly in 76 in the republican party i think so i think john conley he was acquitted all charges have been dismissed he has a clean slate and he's got the record in the courts to prove it so i think there could be a role for john conley in the republican party in 1976 while bringing him back into your government is that a possibility we hadn't gotten to that point but if we find a spot where he would fit and he was willing i think he'd make a fine addition to any administration i thought he was an excellent secretary of the treasury mr president uh i think we've got time for a final question gentlemen and i'm all wound up with one 200 years ago this new nation gave promise to the world of new concepts of freedom of independence of the dignity of the individual today we find ourselves as a great power as as a gendarmed to the world and as an armed supplier to the world last week to the daughters of the american revolution you said like it or not we are a great power and our real choice is whether we succeed or fail in a role we cannot shirt what is that role the role is one of leadership to the free world and leadership really in trying to make a better world not only for those in the united states those aligned with us but hopefully those in countries where we don't have alliances or friendly relations i think the united states

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the united states has the potential as a responsibility on the broadest basis i know to make this a better place in which to live and i think as long as i'm present i'm going to make a maximum effort in that way diplomatically economically in every way that i can conceive i think that's my job as president and i think it's the responsibility of the american people there's no reason why we shouldn't we have the potential we have the people we have everything to do it with and i just hope we'll move ahead thank you very much mr president and good night sir thank you thank you thank you from the blue room at the white house in washington d.c cbs news has broadcast a conversation with president gerald r ford by cbs news correspondents walter cronkite eric severide and bob schieffer this is cbs you

END

